

AS SPRING COMES—PEACE AND THE TALK OF PEACE

Conditions Upon Which Germany and Her Foes Might Come to Terms.

By FRANK H. SIMONDS,
Author of "The Great War."

With the coming of March the time approaches when it will be possible for the armies in the West to begin their campaigns. A year ago the first days of March saw the first French offensive in Champagne, and the second week that great British effort at Neuve Chapelle, the first of the long series of British failures.

The present, then, is a moment for taking account of stock. If peace is to be made at all, if the terrible struggle of a new summer is to be avoided, a beginning must be made with small delay. Once the campaigns have been started the chance for settlement by negotiation will be adjourned until a decision has been had on the battlefield or the approach of another winter, with the deadlock still unbroken, brings the nations of Europe to the very verge of exhaustion.

Is peace by negotiation a possibility now? What are the terms on which the contestants might make peace? What are the terms of a Germany still victorious but manifestly willing to discuss? What are the terms of the Allies, as yet defeated on the battlefield, but as yet determined to go forward to victory now as they were nineteen months ago?

In the present article I shall endeavor to discuss the terms on which Germany and her allies would make peace, the probable price the Allies would put on a general settlement now, and then briefly indicate the reasons that make it seem unlikely that we can have peace without more months of terrific struggle and a sacrifice of life greater than anything that has yet been known in this, the most costly of all wars in life as in treasure.

Germany's Terms.

In recent weeks there have been put forth in many neutral capitals, and particularly in Washington, statements of the terms on which Germany and her allies would make peace that can be accepted as pretty fair indications of the present view in Berlin. Particularly can those statements coming from Washington be reckoned informed and authoritative, because without exception they come from Count von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador, whose declarations certainly do not misrepresent the attitude of his government.

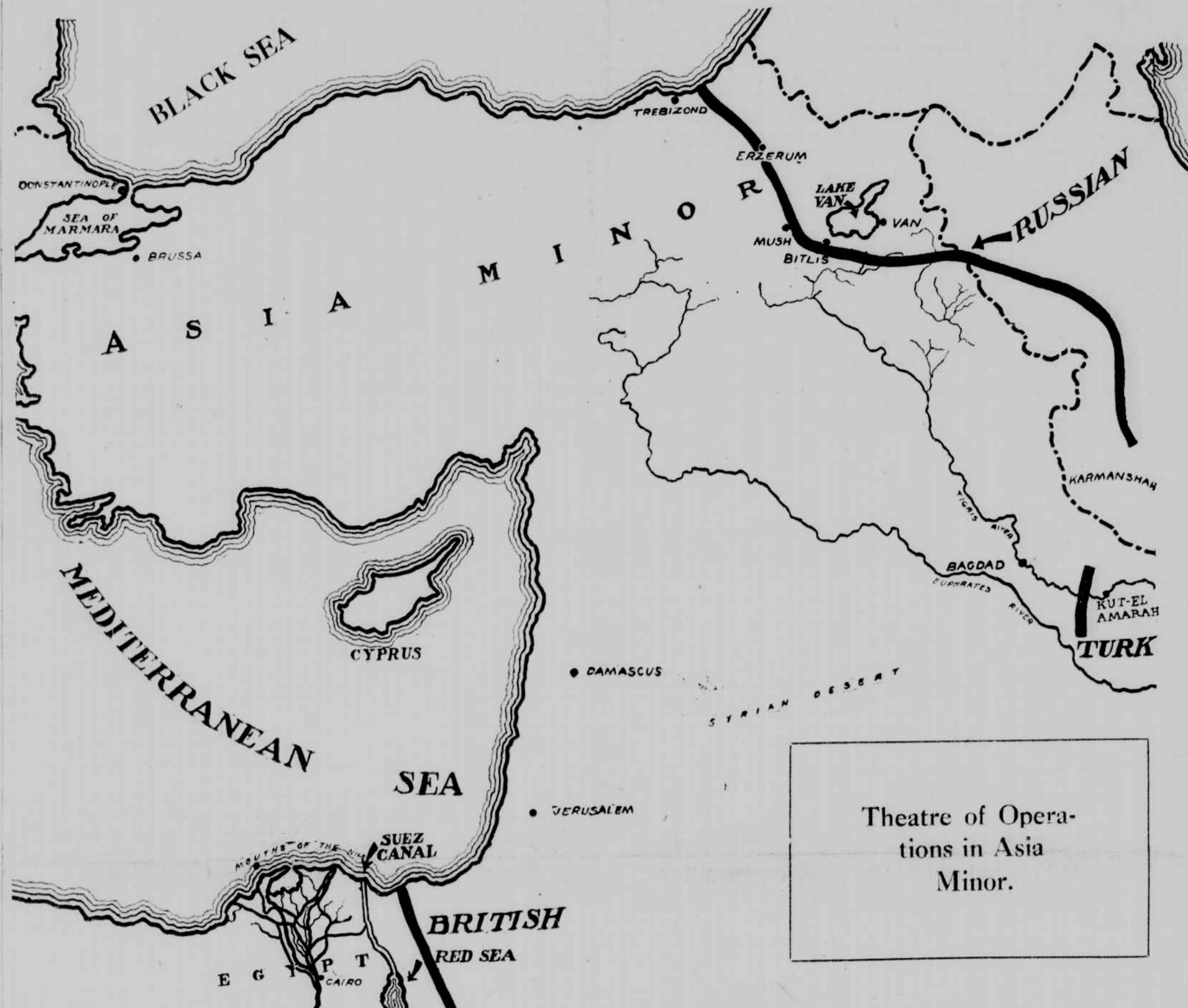
Thus there have been printed from Washington several times clear summaries of the main conditions which Germany accepts as the basis for peace negotiations. These differ but little and may be condensed as follows:

Germany is prepared to evacuate France and Belgium, to recognize the situation that existed in Western Europe before the war as satisfactory to her. She no longer demands indemnity from France or from Belgium in money or colonies. In the same way she is prepared to lay aside her ancient contention for a guarantee of the "freedom of the seas" and to recognize as final British conquest of her African colonies and her Pacific possessions, save only with respect to one African colony, presumably German East Africa.

Demands on Russia.

As to Russia, Germany demands that Russia shall cede all her Polish districts, these to be joined with Austrian Polish lands in Galicia and erected into a state having a German prince and becoming thus a German protectorate. Russia, in addition is asked to cede the province of Courland, with its valuable Baltic ports and its considerable German population. There is thus demanded of Russia the cession of some 60,000 square miles and above 13,000,000 people. Such an arrangement would create a buffer state on Germany's open eastern frontier and abolish the Russian peril. Practically all the territory asked for is now occupied by German armies.

For Austria Germany asks the whole of Montenegro and most of the old Kingdom of Serbia; Macedonia and certain eastern fragments are to fall to Bulgaria. For Austria there is also asked the northern half of Albania; the southern half is to go to Greece, with a morsel of Macedonia which includes Monastir. Presumably Greece will be asked in return to cede Kavala and the Drama district to Bul-



Theatre of Operations in Asia Minor.

The Allied View.

Based on the present status of the war and on the German view of the probable future progress of the war, this is not an unreasonable peace proposal. It leaves France and Belgium without territorial loss and it leaves Great Britain enhanced by the addition of several German colonies. There is not even the suggestion, made earlier, that France or Belgium should cede African colonies in return for German withdrawal.

What now are the Allied terms? These have never been put forth with any degree of accuracy or authority, and it is doubtful if there is as yet any general plan on the Allied side for peace demands. Certain details are, however, quite clear. It is necessary to assume at once that the Allies will insist upon the evacuation of all lands now occupied by German soldiers, whether French, Belgian, Russian or Serbian. To such an agreement the Allies stand pledged by their mutual agreement to make no separate peace.

Some Reasonable Presumptions.

In addition the British have long ago announced, and their Allies have concurred in the announcement, that the evacuation of Belgium must be followed by the payment by the Germans of an indemnity equal to the cost of repairing the ravaged districts and repaying the war levies. France has set forth with absolute clarity her decision to fight until she has regained Alsace-Lorraine, and to this purpose the British are equally bound. For France, too, there is to be an indemnity for damage done in the occupied districts, if the Allies win the war.

Turning eastward, it may be assumed as certain that Russia will insist upon obtaining Galicia and Bukovina from Austria, thus carrying her frontier to the Carpathians. It is probable that if Germany were conquered Russia would demand the

portion of Prussia east of the Vistula and the Polish districts in Silesia and Posen, but this is hardly a price that would be fixed now. As to the Balkans, Russia would demand for her Serbian ally the restoration of all the territory taken recently, and in addition the Austrian districts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a portion of Dalmatia and the northern half of Albania.

Italy, on her side, would demand the Trentino, including Bolzen, the Isonzo district, with Gorizia and Tolmino, Trieste, Istria and most of Dalmatia north of the Narenta River, with the islands of the Adriatic. She would also ask Southern Albania and the port of Valona, which would give her the mastery of the Adriatic.

As to Turkey.

As to Turkey only a soothsayer would venture to forecast. Russia's claim to Constantinople would probably be honored without protest. The Russian capture of Erzerum suggests that before the war ends all of Armenia, perhaps all of Asia Minor, including the upper valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, will fall to Russian armies, and in this case Russia will probably claim what she holds.

France has long looked upon Syria, with the Lebanon district, as her own sphere of influence. British occupation of Palestine as a protection to Egypt has been frequently discussed. Italy and Greece are rivals for the possession of all the Aegean shore from the mouth of the Dardanelles to Rhodes, and Italy has laid claim to the shore from Rhodes to the Gulf of Alexandria. As to Mesopotamia, the British are patently attempting to set up the claim of possession to the whole region as far north as Bagdad.

Possible Dismemberment.

In sum, the Allies plan to dismember Turkey and partition the Osmanli territory among themselves. In almost any settlement that it is possible to conceive, short of Allied defeat, Russia will get Constantinople and most of Armenia, since it would be impossible to return this stricken land to the Kurd and Turkish butchers. But it is quite possible that the mutual jealousies of Italy, Russia, France and Great Britain in the eastern end of the Mediterranean may make it impossible to divide the Turk's Asiatic estate and Turkey will be continued as an Asiatic power.

There has always been a chance, a bare chance, that Turkey, by making a separate peace with the Allies, might save Constantinople. The chance remains, but it is slight. Indubitably the British and the Balkan states, notably Rumania, which is still to be reckoned with, would prefer to witness the arrival of the Russian at the gates of the Black Sea. But Russian sacrifices in the war have been so great and the Russian millions form so necessary a portion of the armies, which the Allies rely upon to wear out the Germans that there is every reason to believe that Russia will be able to fix her own reward in the Near East.

Compromise?

Having set these two views side by side, do they offer any hope for compromise? Two weeks ago I discussed the possibility of the elimination of Belgium from the war by means of a separate treaty of peace with Germany. Such an arrangement was sought by the Germans and fell through. Conceivably it might come, but only if Belgium preferred to withdraw rather than endure the perils of a new invasion, this time by her friends.

Would France consent to modify her demands as to Alsace-Lorraine? I do not believe it, but the Germans, evidently believing otherwise, have, so the London correspondent of The Tribune reports, made the proposal to cede certain Lorraine districts, presumably the city of Metz and the French speaking communes about that town, and there is even the suggestion that Alsace would be erected into an autonomous state. But the French believe that they can retake their lost provinces and that the possession of them is the only assurance they can obtain against a new German attack in the future. They also regard the reunion of Alsace-Lorraine to France as a moral duty.

The Lost Provinces.

Believing that they can win back all of the lost provinces, the French are not likely now to take a portion. They might waive all claim for indemnity, but this is a remote consideration, anyway. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that Germany would think of giving up Alsace at the present moment. She holds all but a tiny corner of it, and she holds a portion of Northern France even larger.

The surrender of these provinces, possessing enormous economic value because of their mineral districts, could come only with complete defeat, and Germany is nowhere near complete defeat; she is not even beaten on the battlefield.

In the East.

The situation is not different in the East. Russia will not cede Poland; Germany cannot agree to return to the old condition without giving up the real prize of the war for her—security on her eastern frontier and the abolition for long years, at least, of the Pan-Slav peril. But she is even less likely to consent to Russian annexation of Galicia, because this fortifies Russia's southeastern frontier, and by bringing the Russians to Cracow threatens the whole of Silesia and throws the German military frontier behind the Oder.

Compromise in the Balkans is only less likely. Conceivably Serbia's allies would ask for her only what she had when the war broke out, but this would close the Austro-German road to Constantinople; it would cut the Berlin-Constantinople-Bagdad line, and it would block the way to German land expansion toward the Near East. In reality it would leave the real victory of the war with the enemies of Germany, because the occasion of the war was the Serbian incident, and the issue of the war has been and remains the contest between Teuton and Slav in the Balkans.

Old Rivalries Remain.

If the Germans should consent to a peace which left Poland to the Russians and Serbia free and undiminished all the tremendous sacrifices that they and the Austrians have made would have been in vain, and Germany would emerge from the war shorn of all her colonies and still surrounded in Europe by an iron circle of enemies, whose frontiers closed all her avenues to the outer world.

The truth is, then, that the differences which led to the present conflict, the rivalries which provoked the struggle, remain. The Western war is fought out; even the Germans concede this; and the German suggestions of peace all recognize that there must be here a return to the conditions of 1914. But in the East there are prizes in German hands which she must surrender if she would have peace.

To surrender them is not merely to lose a war; it is to lose for all time, as far as it is possible to see, the chance to build a Teutonic empire in Europe and Asia; it is to surrender the Balkans and Asia Minor to the Slav, just as she has been compelled to surrender the use of the seas and her colonies beyond the seas to the British.

Germany is not, so far as any one can judge, at the point of complete exhaustion, and the terms that are asked of her are the terms that are asked only of a nation that is not defeated, but crushed. Yet to obtain anything for her great sacrifices Germany must hold permanently French, Russian or Serbian lands, leaving Belgium out of the count; this the unbeaten Allies will not consent to, could not now consent to; hence there is no basis for peace. Some of the issues of the war have been simplified, but none have been eliminated.

Hymns of Hate.

Yet, grave as are the obstacles in the pathway of peace on the side of territorial arrangements, there is an even more considerable obstacle to be found in the present temper of the enemies of Germany. Here is where the German method of conducting the war has had its deepest effect. To-day the bitterness toward Great Britain in Germany has lost much of the fury that marked the era of the Hymn of Hate. Returning British prisoners report that Germany is no longer "strafing" the British at all times. But the situation in Britain is quite the opposite.

No one who has been in Great Britain lately fails to report that there is in the whole country now a grim and unmistakable determination to crush Germany, to carry into Germany the campaign which, by Zeppelins and submarines, has been brought to British shores and cities. There is a cold wrath which impresses all visitors, and that cold wrath does not make for peace, but against it. Nowhere is there the smallest sign in quarters from which such signs must come that the British would consider a peace discussion that did not begin with the restoration of the situation before the war in Western Europe, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, the surrender of the German fleet and merchant marine to the British and the payment of indemnities which would cripple the Germans for generations. Great Britain has recognized the German

Bitterness Caused by German Methods a Serious Bar to a Speedy Settlement.

Copyright 1916—
THE TRIBUNE ASS'N.

challenge as a threat to her existence and she is preparing to face William II as she faced Napoleon.

In France the difference is considerable, but the effect of the French suffering is unmistakable. France is fighting for her existence. Her people believe to a man that until Germany is thrust back and the lost provinces restored there can be no security for the future, and that unless Germany is now terribly crippled there will be a new German invasion at no distant time and new sufferings like those which the French knew in 1870 and know now in the devastated districts. The French do not believe that any peace on the basis of bargain now would make for real peace. They, like the British, are firmly convinced that only by decisive German defeat in the field can there be attained a peace that will stick, and they have set their teeth and are determined to hold out for that time.

As for Russia, she will probably never again have France and Great Britain both fighting for her and both aiding her in the realization of her age-long ambition to hold Constantinople and carry her empire to the warm water. She has men, her Allies furnish money, her resources are unlimited. If Germany is crushed Russian supremacy on the Continent can hardly be challenged again by the Teutons for a generation, and by that time Russian population will far exceed that of Germany and Austria, so far as to make her greater in power than any European nation since the fall of Rome. Present injuries and present perils serve to determine French and British attitudes; Russian policy follows Russian aims with greater calmness but equal tenacity.

The Real Obstacle.

Difficult as are all the conflicting interests and ambitions, I believe there would be peace and no spring campaign, so greatly do all the nations hate the thought of the butcher's bill, were there not among the Allies this bitterness which flows from the application to their own territories of the German "terribleness." For both France and Britain the war is not like other wars; this is the common testimony of all Frenchmen. In France and in Great Britain there is precisely the same view among millions of people, the belief that there can be no safety or security until the German policy has been wrecked on the battlefield, until it has been demonstrated that "terribleness" does not pay in war, and that those who use it bring destruction upon their own country.

Zeppelin raids, the destruction of cathedrals and art treasures, the never ending story of "atrocities"—these have given form and strength to the present temper of the French and the British. These nations do not yet talk of peace or think of peace save at the end of a struggle which shall have established certain things in the world.

Conclusion.

I am not seeking here to analyze, justify or condone British and French tempers. I am here concerned only with discussing them as they affect the question of possible peace. But they do affect this discussion; they are the chief obstacles, and there is no apparent way in which a change can be had without a new campaign and another six months of struggle. If the French and British cannot in that time accomplish their ends, conceivably their own bitterness will diminish, as has the German, and an exhausted Europe will come to the discussion of peace, forgetting passion and ambition in its weariness. But this time is not yet, and nowhere outside of Germany, where the French and British temper is not understood, is there any talk of peace.

To me the most astonishing thing in the present situation is the fact that the German does not now seem to have the least comprehension of the state of mind of those who are fighting him. He cannot understand why they will not talk of peace when he offers terms that are at the least generous on the face of the present battle lines. But the reason is not merely found in the fact that the Allies expect to win; it is found in the reaction to German policies and methods of making war as they have been revealed in Belgium, France and Great Britain and described to the non-Teutonic world.